



NEWS



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By Staff Writer, Fontana Herald News

January 11, 2024



A fire damages a restaurant in Fontana on Jan. 10. (Contributed photo by San Bernardino County Fire)

A fire damaged a restaurant in Fontana on Jan. 10, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

At 7:25 a.m., crews were dispatched to a reported commercial structure fire in the 9800 block of Sierra Avenue after 9-1-1 callers saw smoke coming from the center unit of a strip mall.

Firefighters deployed inside and on the roof to suppress the fire. Heavy smoke conditions and high heat were found inside the restaurant.

Truck crews on the roof encountered heavy fire and smoke from their ventilation holes. They also found the blaze had extended to a common attic space of the building. Due to the fire conditions and building size, a second alarm was quickly struck, dispatching additional personnel and equipment to the location.

The fire was brought under control within 28 minutes of arrival. Crews were successful in limiting the fire to one unit and the adjacent attic space. Multiple businesses and the majority of the building were saved.

All searches of the building came up negative and no injuries were reported. The fire remains under investigation. The Fontana Police Department assisted with traffic control for the incident.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fire-damages-restaurant-in-strip-mall-in-fontana-on-jan-10/article_932c3880-b050-11ee-9f65-cfa943b0894c.html

Lake Arrowhead MAC Meeting

By Diane Oestreich, Mountain News

January 10, 2024



The Lake Arrowhead Municipal Advisory Council meeting was held on Thursday, January 4, 2024 at the San Bernardino County facility in Twin Peaks. It was also accessible by Zoom.

Things to be celebrated were

In September, 2023, the State Water Board ordered that water no longer be pumped and bottled from Strawberry Creek in a cease and desist order issued to Blue Triton, based in Stamford, Conn., who took over the operation from Nestlé Waters North America. At the time Roberto Cervantes, the board's supervising engineer, said the public involvement in the case, which included thousands of comments submitted, "proves that when the community unites, even giants can be held accountable."

The new entrance for Mountains Community Hospital provides quick and efficient patient check in.

A generous California Arts Council grant to the Arrowhead Arts Association will provide ongoing funding for classical music education, training, and experiences to local schools. Scholarships for private music lessons will also be provided, as well as public concerts.

An update from Cal Trans is anticipated soon. They have been very busy working on their project to install rock netting at various places on the mountain. A report on drinking water quality is also anticipated for next month's meeting.

In about a month, the Rotary Club will host its annual Polar Bear Plunge for charity into Lake Arrowhead.

Elected officials reports followed

Sidney Sonck from State Senator Rosilicie Ochoa-Bogh's office reported that the legislature had just reconvened on January 3. The governor's budget is due on January 10, so he advised keeping an eye on that. He explained that two-year bills are introduced in odd-numbered years. They face more hurdles and require work and extra time. Fiscal reports are due on January 12. January 19 is the last day to submit bill requests to the Office of Legislative Counsel. They help craft the wording and check for overlapping or contradicting statutes. By the 19th of this month, all the bills introduced in the 2023-24 legislative session will be known. Next meeting, he will brief the MAC on the legislative package. Friday, February 16 is the final day for all bills to be introduced. Senator Ochoa-Bogh has one more year in her term and has announced her candidacy for the 2024 election. Sidney Sonck is now assigned full time to the mountain, so he will do his best to get the

Senator to the mountain as often as he can. He requested that local resident keep him apprised of events where her attendance would be appreciated.

A member of the audience asked if the numbers he had heard on the news about California's fiscal situation were accurate: \$68 billion in debt and \$1 trillion in unfunded liabilities. Sonck said they intend to closely monitor the figures as reported in the governor's budget. "It is still a requirement that the governor balance the budget, is it not?" the audience member queried. "Absolutely," Sonck replied.

Corrine Mora from Rep. Jay Obernolte's office reported that Congress would reconvene on Tuesday, January 9. January 19 and February 2 are established budget deadlines. Tackling the debt crisis in the federal budget is a focus for the legislators, which includes \$34 trillion, about \$100,000 for each American citizen. Congressman Obernolte has been working to establish a committee to search out wasteful and duplicate spending. She requested that comments be directed to her at corinne.mora@mail.house.gov.

Iris Gutierrez, field representative from Assemblyman Lackey's office, reported on the annual student competition art contest in which 200 students from the district submitted artwork. The art will be showcased at the State Capitol in January and February. A grant-writing seminar will be offered January 19.

Government Agencies

CHP Officer Ubaldo Gonzalez reported on traffic incidents during the holidays (Christmas and New Year's are maximum enforcement periods), as well as the CHIPs for Kids toy drive conducted through the San Bernardino Sheriffs Department. Close to 1000 toys were collected, up from 850 last year. Toys were collected and distributed with the assistance of the CHP senior volunteer program. The toys are donated to local community centers such as The Boys and Girls Clubs of Lake Arrowhead and Crestline, Rim Family Services of Rim Forest, Crestline Family Services, Sandals Church in Lake Arrowhead, Doves Outreach Center of Big Bear, and Rotary Club of Big Bear. Anyone knowing of struggling families who need toys for birthdays, etc. should reach out to the Sheriff's office. Toys for Kids distributes toys and bicycle helmets.

Snow always brings more travelers up the mountain. Drivers are required to carry chains during the winter season. Additionally they are advised to increase distance between their vehicle and others, especially if snow is coming down. Vehicle Code 25251 states than flashers (hazard lights) are NOT to be used while driving, he added. Drivers may warn of rocks in the road with hazard lights, but they are not to be used during fog. Flagging with pilot cars is ongoing on Highway 18 between Highway 138 and Crest Forest Drive while rock clearance is taking place Monday-Friday through approximately January 26 between 7 am-4 pm. An alternate route is between Crest Forest Drive and Highway 138. Officer Gonzalez introduced a new lieutenant: Nicholas King. CHP officers and sheriffs have been changed to 12-hour shifts to provide more coverage. Snow will bring illegal parking for snow play, tour buses dropping people off and moving to a new location, and drivers spinning out and crashing. The officers said they are ready to deal with the challenges.

Deputy Sheriff Victoria Rygalski, who had been a deputy on the mountain for about six years, was just promoted. Her temporary duty assignment is crimes against children. Their office assistant was just promoted to office specialist, and a new deputy will be coming from jail duty to work locally. Newly hired deputies go to Field Training in San Bernardino and then step into positions on the mountain. Equipment upgrades include tracks added to their four-seat Ranger which will be better prepared to handle snowstorms. A new Sno-Cat should be finished up on January 28, according to the manufacturer, and is scheduled to be shipped down on January 31.

Vehicle break-ins have been up. Drivers are encouraged to lock their cars or put valuables in the car's trunk or cover them with a blanket.

Two Fentanyl deaths have occurred since the last MAC meeting. Getting prescriptions from pharmacies (not neighbors) is the best way to defend against death from Fentanyl. To deal with the Fentanyl epidemic, County Fire carries Narcan. They will also provide it for use with those who have a high propensity for drug abuse.

Twenty-two families were hosted at the sheriff's station for Christmas. Full Christmas dinners were served, and Santa came with toys.

The Sheriff's Department is allotted \$40,000 each year for extra patrol during snow season. Deputies typically fill two ticket books per day writing tickets. The parking fine is \$150 if a parking violation notice is clearly posted.

Chief Joe Barna of **San Bernardino County Fire** reported on incidents to which the fire department responded. The majority are medical issues. Snowcat training for 18 people has started. In March Snowmadeddon caused a lot of people to get on-the-job training to supplement first responders. "Mountain people are pioneer people," Chief Barna declared. They took care of themselves and each other. Snow Valley is assisting with the training.

For winter driving, Chief Barna reminded those present to be prepared in advance. "We have a lot of good information on our website," he noted. An app called "ready sb county" is available from the app store. The categories on the app include Household information, Animals, Places, Vehicles, Emergency Contacts, and Reminders. (It is helpful to have information written down before you try to complete the categories, because if you leave one to find a phone number or address, you will have to start over.) Another useful access point for emergencies is found at sbcountyfire.org/alertwarning. Be sure to keep a winter survival kit readily available, keep your vehicles fueled up and make sure they have been serviced. Carry snowshoes with you. Drive slowly, don't tailgate, don't use hazard lights—but do turn on headlights.

An audience member asked about gas meters and fires during the snow emergency. The Gas Company has been asked to attend MAC meetings but so far they haven't. Investigation by SB Fire has not determined the cause of the gas explosions and fires of 2023. The suggestion was made to cover the top of the gas meter, which would also reduce the weight of snow on the meter.

An audience member noted that Mountains Community Hospital is holding free Naloxone (aka Narcan) training January 25. Symptoms to look for and aftercare will be covered.

Chief Brian Grant of the Forest Service addressed fuel suppression from Baldwin Lake to Cedar Pines Park. He thanked those assembled for the welcome given to visiting firefighters from other states during the summer. Their staffing is down 50%, and fire crews from other states came to fill in the gap. The firefighters were housed at the UCLA Conference Center. In addition to personnel, the Forest Service needs more engines, currently having only four. Controlled burns are being done when the weather warrants to burn piles of collected fuel from the forest floor for fire prevention. They have 441 acres remaining to clear.

Supervisor Dawn Rowe came in by Zoom. She has just completed her first year as Board Chair. It is a 2-year term, so she has one more year as chair. Issues that she addressed included crime prevention and public safety, which are always a concern, and are being addressed by the Sheriff's Department. Smash and grabs have become a problem locally. Operation Consequence has been launched with a \$10 million investment by the Board to the Sheriff's Department to apprehend thousands of pounds of illegal narcotics, including Fentanyl,

confiscate illegal weapons, and lock up repeat offenders. Regarding transportation, the Free Mountain program started off in Big Bear as a pilot program and worked well, encouraging tourists to park, shop, and dine locally without having to drive themselves around. It has expanded into the Rim communities and serves residents as well as tourists.

Obtaining \$50,000 for the Crest Forest Senior Lunch nutrition program was one of Supervisor Rowe's greatest accomplishments in 2023. The facility's HVAC system also needed an overhaul and replacement, and \$250,00 was obtained for that as well. Rebuilding Together requested funds for home repairs following Snowmageddon that were not paid by FEMA or insurance. They requested \$50,000 for immediate needs, which Supervisor Rowe anticipates will be funded at the next board meeting. The current pickleball court at McKay Park will be expanded by five additional courts by November. Her team is looking for ways to open up additional land in that area and is examining current leases.

Assemblyman Lackey and Senator Ochoa Bogh helped to obtain state funding for additional snow removal equipment, including a front-end loader or two, track snow vehicles to supplement equipment that was inadequate for the 2023 snow emergency. A website providing suggestions for emergency preparedness has been created at prepare.sbcounty.com. Erin Fox of the Red Cross Disaster Program suggested adding names of organizations that channeled funds to where they were needed during the snow emergency, so people could direct their material or monetary resources where they wanted them to go. She also suggested the addition of a volunteer organization portal so people could connect with organizations for which they would like to volunteer.

The site is a central location providing links for other emergencies that are common to San Bernardino County such as earthquakes, fires, floods, and mudslides. Key disaster resources are clickable links at the top of the page, and videos offer help covering fire season to winter concerns. A new county director of emergency services has been hired who has a lot of experience and will be an asset to the county.

Community Organizations

Arrowhead Lake Association's new General Manager Mike Pate said he often feels like he is drinking from a fire hose but is moving forward with plans to strengthen and improve the association. He plans to attend MAC meetings in the future and is implementing a "Coffee with the General Manager" outreach where residents can share ideas and concerns in an informal setting.

Crestline Chamber of Commerce was represented by Sara Green via Zoom. She announced that Corks and Hops—the Mardi Gras Edition, will be held February 10 on the beach, weather permitting. Easter is March 31 this year, pushing Mardi Gras into a month of tricky weather. She announced that Goodwin's Market is scheduled to re-open on April 15, when they will have a grand re-opening celebration. Vice Chairman Louis Boehle, who helps Beverly Hills decorate for Christmas, donated this year's Gingerbread-themed decorations to Crestline.

On December 19, the three Chambers got together in a "Reimagining the Mountain" meeting to talk about promoting tourism Rim-wide. A 1-3% assessment would be implemented on beds and entertainment. Projected revenue ranges from \$1 million to \$6 million from those fees. Part of the TBID (Tourism Business Improvement District) would be the creation of a Welcome California Center in Lake Arrowhead Village. There are currently 22 of these centers across California. They have a budget of \$150 million. Tourism busses also are connected to Welcome Centers. Representatives from Lake Arrowhead Chamber are working with major hospitality businesses such as Lake Arrowhead, Skypark, and the Lake Gregory Company, because if these major attractions are not on board, the concept is bound to fail. Funding for research on the concept is

estimated to be \$50-\$60,000. A vote of 50%+1 would be required for approval of the final proposal. This is currently early in the planning stages.

A representative of Mountain Transit said the shuttle service to Snow Valley had been cancelled because of low ridership. They are trying to update their social media presence.

Rim of the World Recreation and Park District General Manager Jenny Hueter announced that they are looking for board members for the newly-formed Mountain Recreation Foundation. The board of the Recreation and Park Department will have the final say, but applications are being taken for the Foundation. They are doing upgrades to community centers, one in Twin Peaks and one in Running Springs, which are used for parties and other events. The community centers are also intended to be cooling and warming centers. They are always looking for people to teach classes at the community centers and share their talents. Call (909) 337-7275 to volunteer. Rim-rec.org is their website.

Erin Fox of the Red Cross announced that a fifth shelter training will be offered at Calvary Chapel Rim Forest on Saturday, January 13 from 9 am-12 pm. The Presbyterian Church of Lake Arrowhead has signed a new facility agreement with the Red Cross to install smoke alarms under a program called Hot Shots, which deploys people to install the alarms. The Red Cross also partners with Rimready.org, which has a Facebook page as well and provides information via social media to advise people where to go in case of an emergency. The Red Cross has talent who can teach on disaster preparedness at the community centers. Erin Fox can be reached at Erin.Fox@redcross.org.

Scott Rindenow addressed the effort to re-open Highway 173 beyond North Bay for emergency use. The Paradise Fire of 2018 emphasized the need for escape routes. His group (which includes Jenny Hueter) has met with Caltrans regarding the issue. The road is growing increasingly disabled and needs rebuilding. Landslides, mudslides, earthquakes, and fires should convince us that “our mountain population needs another way when there is an emergency.” The committee has developed several versions of what could be done to restore the road.

Lewis Murray promised to check with LACSD to have them address the water quality issue at the next MAC meeting and to contact SoCal Gas again to have them come also.

Community Input

Neighbors are receiving STRS renewal information that only lists the address of properties with no contact information or other information. The caller requested that the notices contain such information, because neighbors should be able to have input about short term rentals.

Caller also requested that San Bernardino County be queried as to whether other lakes in the area are being tested for PFAS levels, an issue that was discussed at the last LACSD meeting. Lewis Murray said he would look into that.

https://www.mountain-news.com/news/lake-arrowhead-mac-meeting/article_ac4b87c2-aff-11ee-881e-cf4bd99af65e.html